

THE QUESTION.

THE inquiry, whether the female mind is inferior, or equal, to that of man, is not only an unprofitable one, but it is a question, which cannot, considered by itself, be determined. They are not proper subjects of comparison. We might as wisely ask, whether the rose or the oak has the *préeminence*. All value is relative ; and the true inquiry is, for what ends were these different things designed. If for different ends, then it may be affirmed, that they are perfectly, and of course, equally well fitted for the respective purposes, for which their Creator intended them. There is, consequently, no place for comparison. There is no inferiority — no *préeminence*.

Men and women were designed to occupy different stations, and to fulfil different duties. Their wise and benevolent Creator has endowed them with physical and intellectual qualities, which are adapted to their respective destinies. They are both most useful and most happy in their appropriate spheres. Neither can perform, with entire success, the duties of the other.

As the minds of men and of women are equally well adapted to their respective duties, so they are equally capable of being prepared by education for those duties. That education ought, consequently, to have a specific direction, many things, indeed, both sexes must learn in common ; but it would obviously be inconsistent and wrong, that they should be conducted through precisely the same course of studies. They both, however, need an equal *amount* of education ; and it might be plausibly argued, that if either sex must have the preference in this respect, females require, for the successful discharge of their duties, a more thorough mental discipline than men. Most of the ordinary employments of men can be performed without a high degree of intellectual culture ; but for

the mother, who almost creates the character, and decides the destiny of her children, what discipline can be too great, what attainments superfluous?

Entertaining these views of the nature and importance of female education, I feel it to be very desirable, that females themselves should, to a far greater extent than heretofore, become the teachers of their own sex. I admit the high merit and great success of many male teachers, and have no doubt that the services of such gentlemen will continue, for a long time, and perhaps always, to be needed. But I think it undeniable that, other things being equal, females are the best instructors of their own sex. Indeed, I will go further and express my decided opinion, that for boys, also, till they arrive at the age of eight or ten years, females are the best teachers. Woman is constituted by the Creator the natural instructor of youth. He has committed the child to her care from its birth; and he has poured into her heart an inexhaustible affection, a serene patience, a winning gentleness, which pre-eminently fit her for the management of children. In all these qualities she far surpasses man. She has more knowledge of the youthful heart, and more power to control it, not by force but by the more efficacious and salutary sway of love. I have little doubt, that if all our schools for young children were placed under the care of female instructors, they would be quite as well taught and better governed. The morals of the children would be preserved more pure, and their tempers and affections would be rendered more gentle, kind and amiable. Boston has placed all her primary schools under female teachers, and I believe the experiment has been highly honorable to the instructors, and advantageous to the city. Might not the experiment be carried further?

But for female pupils, I repeat, I consider it as very desirable that the *instructors should be females*. Numerous considerations will suggest themselves to every reflecting mind, which show that well qualified female instructors must possess great advantages over men.

It is, therefore, highly gratifying to see female seminaries multiplying and rising rapidly in character. It is to be hoped that they will increase in number and in the means of accomplishing their purposes. There ought to be several seminaries of the highest order for the education of *teachers* as well as others; and these seminaries ought to receive public patronage. I do not wish to see them *established and governed* by legislatures. They would be much better managed by a

few individuals. Nor would I have these seminaries called *Colleges*, because this word would create prejudices without producing any benefit. Let these institutions be furnished with competent instructors, libraries, apparatus, and whatever else may be necessary to impart a thorough female education. If suitable female teachers cannot, at first, be obtained, let well qualified gentlemen be appointed. The institutions would soon create teachers.

Are not the ladies of Boston and its vicinity the proper persons to commence such an institution? They would, undoubtedly, receive the cordial approbation and aid of many liberal and enlightened gentlemen.

Many advantages would result from introducing females to a far greater extent than heretofore, as teachers. It would open to female talent and industry a new source of emolument, and thus relieve much suffering, which is produced by the want of suitable employment. How many widows and orphans might obtain a competent support, if teaching were more generally committed to females, and their services were more liberally rewarded? There is need too, of a very great increase of teachers, especially in the Western States, and such is the demand for labor and talent in this country, that an adequate number of suitable male instructors cannot be obtained.

An honorable and highly interesting field would thus be opened for the enterprise of the female mind. Many ladies, who might not be impelled by necessity, but who have no special and worthy object to occupy their minds, would here find an opportunity of devoting themselves to the service of their country, to the elevation of their sex, and to the promotion of the glory of God. Many Catholic females give themselves for life to the work of education, and Catholic seminaries are multiplying in our land, with a rapidity, which I, as a Protestant, a republican and a parent, view with alarm. Will not Protestant ladies be prompted by an equal zeal for pure religion, for the welfare of their sex, and for the permanence of our free institutions? How can a woman more beneficially serve the cause of human happiness? If she shall have a family of her own, she will then be called to be an instructor. If she shall not, there will be families which will need her aid.

I ask again — are not the ladies of Boston and the vicinity the proper persons to commence an Institution for Females?

A FATHER.